

Media Minutes www.freepress.net

Plugging the Analog Hole

Digitize your old records and cassette tapes while you still can. The recording and motion picture industries are teaming up to lobby Congress on legislation that would plug the so-called "analog hole." This term was coined three years ago by the Motion Picture Association of America. It refers to the ability to convert content from digital to analog and vice versa — like videotaping a movie or making an MP3 of something recorded off the radio. Converting digital content to analog strips it of any built-in content protection systems, which allow it to be re-copied at will. Movie studios and record labels would like Congress to require electronics manufacturers to embed special chips in all recording devices that would automatically shut them down if someone attempts to convert copyrighted content from analog to digital. This would make it impossible to transfer records and tapes you rightfully own to MP3 or other digital formats. A discussion draft of such legislation began circulating on Capitol Hill earlier this month.

Commercial Carpet Bombing

And now here's a Media Minutes Fast Fact: Prime time television content is shrinking to make way for more advertising. In any given hour, an average program contains 42

minutes of content and 18 minutes of ads. But if you combine the spot load with show promos, teasers, and recap clips, the actual content of any given week's program is closer to 40 minutes — meaning that for every two minutes of new content aired every week there's a minute of filler. TV networks are adding more filler by adding more commercial breaks — the industry standard for an hour-long primetime show a year ago used to be four breaks per hour, but now it's six.

Indexing the Web

And now, here's another Media Minutes Fast Fact: According to the experts at Google, to completely index all of the information on the Internet will take some 300 years. As of right now the Internet contains about 5 million terabytes of data — more than 36,000 times the amount of information contained in all the books housed in the Library of Congress. So far, Google has only indexed about 170 terabytes of the 'net — just three one-thousandths of a percent of what exists online.

Real People

I am a medical student currently doing a rotation in toxicology at the poison control center. Today, this woman called in very upset because she caught her little daughter eating ants. I quickly reassured her that the ants are not harmful and there would be no need to bring her daughter into the hospital. She calmed down and at the end of the conversation happened to mention

that she gave her daughter some ant poison to eat in order to kill the ants.

Early this year, some Boeing employees on the airfield decided to steal a life raft from one of the 747s. They were successful in getting it out of the plane and home. Shortly after they took it for a float on the river, they noticed a Coast Guard helicopter coming towards them. It turned out that the chopper was homing in on the emergency locator beacon that activated when the raft was inflated. They are no longer employed at Boeing.

A true story out of San Francisco: A man, wanting to rob a downtown Bank of America, walked into the branch and wrote "this iz a stikkup. Put all your munny in this bag." While standing in line, waiting to give his note to the teller, he began to worry that someone had seen him write the note and might call the police before he reached the teller's window. So he left the Bank of America and crossed the street to Wells Fargo. After waiting a few minutes in line, he handed his note to the Wells Fargo teller. She read it and, surmising from his spelling errors that he wasn't the brightest light in the harbor, told him that she could not accept his stickup note because it was written on a Bank of America deposit slip and that he would either have to fill out a Wells Fargo deposit slip or go back to Bank of America. Looking somewhat defeated, the man said, "OK" and left. He was arrested a few minutes later, as he was waiting in line back at Bank of America.

A guy walked into a little corner store with a shotgun and demanded all of the cash from the cash drawer. After the cashier put the cash in a bag, the robber saw a bottle of Scotch that he wanted behind the counter on the shelf. He told the cashier to put it in the bag as well, but the cashier refused and said, because I don't believe you are over 21. "The robber said he was, but the clerk still refused to give it to him because he didn't believe him. At this point, the robber took his driver's license out of his wallet and gave it to the clerk. The clerk looked it over and agreed that the man was in fact over 21 and he put the Scotch in the bag. The robber then ran from the store with his loot. The cashier promptly called the police and gave the name and address of the robber that he got off the license. They arrested the robber two hours later.

A pair of Michigan robbers entered a record shop nervously waving revolvers. The first one shouted, "Nobody move!" When his partner moved, the startled first bandit shot him.

Seems this guy wanted some beer pretty badly. He decided that he'd just throw a cinder block through a liquor store window, grab some booze, and run. So, he lifted the cinder block and heaved it over his head at the window. The cinder block bounced back and hit the would be thief on the head, knocking him unconscious. It seems the liquor store window was made of plexiglass. The whole event was caught on videotape. Oh, that smarts.

Ann Arbor: The Ann Arbor News crime column

AmigaMCCC News

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P.O. Box 813

Bedford, Texas 76095

<http://www.amigamccc.org>

January Calendar

January 30 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:00 pm — Grand Prairie Public Library
901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

January 30 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 9:30 pm — Location TBD

January 28 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

reported that a man walked into a Burger King in Ypsilanti, Michigan at 12:50 a.m., flashed a gun and demanded cash. The clerk turned him down because he said he couldn't open the cash register without a food order. When the man ordered onion rings, the clerk said they weren't available for breakfast. The man, frustrated, walked away.

[Thanks to Johnny C. Kitchens for these tidbits.]